THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) 29 Post Offices have been opened till date in rural areas and one Post Office opened in border area of Punjab during the last three years.

(b) Opening of new Post Offices in Punjab, under the future schemes having e-mail, internet and computer facilities, is subject to the fulfillment of prescribed norms and availability of requisite resources.

(c) and (d) Computerization of Post Offices and provision of other facilities is based on the traffic analysis and return on investment from such services.

MoU between India and New Zealand

3839. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and New Zealand have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Information Technology for Research and Development, skills exchange and business-to-business co-operation in the Hi-tech sector;

(b) if so, whether New Zealand has urged India to develop Information Technology in that country;

(c) whether New Zealand considers India as IT power house; and

(d) if so, to what extent India has agreed to provide all co-operation in software development and training in New Zealand?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. An Arrangement was signed on 7th December 2001 between Government of the Republic of India and Government of New Zealand for co-operation in Information Technology sector to promote the development of relations between business, research bodies, educational institutions, central and local Government agencies and other ancillary

organisations in this sector. This arrangement will enable both countries to leverage capabilities and opportunities in IT sector for mutual benefit.

(c) and (d) The strength of Indian IT software industry is well known to New Zealand and it has, therefore, been agreed to co-operate, *inter-alia,* in the field of software and multi-media development through exchange of information promoting understanding of regulatory approaches, facilitating trade in information industry, encouraging trade and business networks & partnerships between India and New Zealand information industry companies for, participation in bilateral, regional and international dialogue and co-operation in this area.

The co-operation is, however subject to the availability of funds & resources and observance of applicable laws and regulations of both countries.

Starvation deaths

†3840. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages in the country which are adversely affected from starvation and the number of starvation deaths, State-wise;

(b) whether their number is increasing;

(c) whether Government have made any survey in this regard during the last three years;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No information has been received

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.